

GUIDE

TO

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

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For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

ON THE INWARD UTTERANCE, OR THE VOICE OF GOD IN THE SOUL.

"I laid my request before the Lord, and the Lord answered me." This is a remark which is frequently made by persons of eminent piety. They cannot doubt that they truly hold communication with God. Addressing him either in silence or the spoken utterance of words, they find that they do not ask without receiving. God speaks to them in return.

It is important to understand the nature of the answers which God gives. In those earlier religious dispensations, of which we have an account in the Old Testament, God answered his people in various ways; by visible signs, by the cloud and the fire, by Urim and Thummim, by miracles, by audible voices. The periods of those dispensations have passed away, and the methods of communication, which were appropriate to them, have passed away also. What are we to understand, then, by the divine utterance, the voice of God in the soul, of which those persons, who are eminently pious at the present time, have frequent occasion to speak?

We remark, in the first place, that one class of those inward utterances, which are frequently regarded as returns or answers from God, appear to be impressions, or rather suggested thoughts or suggestions, which are suddenly but distinctly originated in the mind; and apparently from some cause independent of the mind itself. Sometimes the suggestion consists in suddenly bringing to the mind a particular passage of Scripture, which is received as the divine answer. Sometimes the suggestion consists in the sudden origination of new ideas or truths in a new form of words; but truths so remarkable, either in their origin or their application, that we are disposed to regard them as the inward intimations and the voice of God.

Of the frequent existence of such inward and sudden suggestions or impressions, we suppose there can be no reasonable doubt. It is well understood, and seems to be placed beyond question, that they make a portion of the internal history of many pious persons.

A few remarks may properly be made on this class of inward voices; and one is, that sudden suggestions or impressions may have, and that they do sometimes have a natural origin. The natural man, as well as the religious man, will sometimes tell us, that he has had an unexpected or remarkable suggestion or impression. In the treatises which exist on the subject of disordered mental action, the existence of frequent and sudden impressions, such as have been described, is laid down, and apparently with good reason, because the results have justified it, as one of the marks of an incipient state of insanity. Another remark, which it may be proper to make here, is this. It is a common, and probably a well founded opinion, that sudden inward suggestions or impressions may have, and that they do sometimes have, a Satanic origin. If Satan is permitted to operate upon the human mind at all, and lead it astray, of which the Scriptures do not permit us to doubt, it is certainly a reasonable supposition, that he sometimes makes his attacks in this manner. And especially may we take this view, when we consider that he is a spiritual being, and would more naturally act upon the spirit or minds of men, than upon the body. A third remark is, that the sudden suggestions or impressions which we are considering, are undoubtedly, in some instances, from a truly good or divine source. It is hardly reasonable to suppose, that God would forbid himself a method of operation on the human mind, which he allows to Satan; and which, if it may be employed under a bad direction, to a bad purpose, is also susceptible in other hands of a good one. We may reasonably conclude, therefore, that the Holy Spirit sometimes adopts this method of operation.

It remains to be added here, that, if these remarkable suggestions may arise from sources so various and different, they should be received with caution; otherwise we may be led astray by the voice of nature or the voice of Satan; believing it to be the voice of our Heavenly Father. God deals with us as rational beings. And it is a consequence of God's recognition of our rationality, that he does not require us to act upon sudden suggestions or impressions, even if they come from himself, without our first subjecting them to the scrutiny of reason. And it is here that we find the ground of our safety in a method of operation, which otherwise would be likely to be full of danger. Accordingly, when a sudden suggestion is presented to the mind, we ought to delay upon it, although it may seem at first sight to require an immediate action. We should compare it with the will of God, as revealed in the Bible. We should examine it dispassionately and deliberately with the best lights of reason, and with the assistance of prayer. Indeed, if the suggestion comes from God, it is presented with this very object; not to lead us to action without judgment and without reason; but to arouse the judgment from its stupidity, and to put it upon a train of important inquiry. And

when this is done in a calm and dispassionate manner, and with sincere desires for divine direction, we have good reason to believe, that we may avoid the dangers which have been referred to, by detecting those suggestions which are from an evil source, and may realize important benefits.

But we ought not to feel, that in our inward conversations with God, we are limited to such occasions as have been mentioned; and that we have no inward response except by means of sudden and remarkable impressions, which are liable to the dangers which have been indicated, and which generally exist only at considerable intervals from each other. On the contrary, we have abundant reason for saying that it is our privilege always to be conversing with God, and always to receive the divine answer. He will speak to us as a Father, and make known all that is necessary for us. It is a great truth, almost as evident on natural as it is undoubtedly evident on Scriptural grounds, that, when we have given ourselves wholly to God, he will give himself to us in all that is necessary and important for us. And this general principle involves the subordinate idea, that he is willing to communicate knowledge, and to become our **TEACHER**. And while in the process of teaching and guiding men, he operates outwardly, even at the present day, by means of his written word; he also operates inwardly by means of interior communications. Sometimes by sudden suggestions, in the manner which has already been mentioned; but more frequently by availing himself of the more ordinary laws of the mind's acting; and by uttering his inward voice through the decisions of a spiritually enlightened judgment.

But God does not speak in this way, unless there is **SINCERITY**. And by sincerity we mean a sincere desire to do his will in all things, as well as a sincere desire to know and do his will in the particular thing which is laid before him. Such sincerity, which may be regarded as but another name for sanctification, naturally excludes all the secret biasses of self-interest and prejudice, and places the mind in the position most favorable for the admission and discovery of truth. It is in such a mind, and not in a mind which is governed by worldly passions, that the Holy Ghost, whose office it is to guide men into all necessary truth, loves to dwell. We may, therefore, lay down the general principle, that the decision of a spiritually enlightened judgment, made in a state of entire consecration to God's will, and with a sincere desire to know his will, may justly be regarded as a divine answer, or an answer of God, in the particular matter or subject, in relation to which an answer has been sought. The decision of the judgment, which is arrived at in such a state of freedom from self-interest and passion, and under the secret guidance of the Holy Spirit, is oftentimes so clear and so prompt, that it almost seems to be a voice audibly speaking in the soul. It is true, however, in point of fact, that it is only the inward ear, or the ear of faith, and not the outward or bodily ear which is spoken to. In yielding our assent to the decisions of our judgments, we have *faith*, under all the circumstances of the case, and especially in view of the promise of God to give light to those that ask him, that we are adopting the decisions to which our

Heavenly Father would lead us. It is in this method, a method which appears to be free from dangers, that God ordinarily answers and converses with his people.

In view of what has been said, we come to the conclusion, that it is very proper for pious people, especially for those whose hearts are truly sanctified, to speak not only of laying their requests before God, but of receiving a divine answer. It is not improper for them to speak, if it is done with a suitable degree of reverence, of holding *conversation with God—of talking with God*. The expressions correspond with the facts. To talk with God—to go to him familiarly as children to a parent—to speak to him in the secrecy of their spirits, and to receive an inward answer as gracious as it is unerring, is not only a privilege granted them, but a privilege practically realized. When, therefore, we find in the memoirs of very pious persons, as we sometimes do, statements and accounts of their holding internal conversations with God, of the requests they make, and of the answers they receive, we are not necessarily to regard such experiences as fanatical or deceitful. On the contrary, we think it impossible for a person to be truly and wholly the Lord's, without frequently being the subject of this inward and divine intercourse.

X. Y.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

BR. KING,—It would have given me great pleasure, had I been able to furnish an article for the Guide as often as you wished me to, for I love to dwell upon the subject which this work illustrates and enforces. It may not be improper for me to say, that most of this is written with my dear babe in my arms, and many little duties calling for me, while I have not a great degree of physical strength. Notwithstanding all this, I claim my old signature.

“CHARITY NEVER FAILETH.”

About three years ago, while under a strong temptation, (as I believe,) to a species of uncharitable feeling, I was induced to commit to memory the chapter upon charity. It being a noted chapter among Christians, I will not be particular in citing to it. The special benefit which I then felt from studying this, and have since realized from time to time in repeating it to myself, cannot be told. “*Charity never faileth*,” is often whispered to my mind's ear; and in that whisper I hear a sermon that brings to view all that concerns the lover of Jesus. The assertion contained in this sentence is very searching. We may have failed

to get in possession of real charity ; or, we may have failed to keep in possession of it when once it was obtained ; but where it does in truth exist, it never fails to do its work. Perhaps this manner of speaking upon it may seem to warp it from the exact meaning of the Apostle then speaking ; for he seems to be comparing it with those passions that shall pass away with time, showing that charity is the glory of the saints in light, after they shall have done with seeing "through a glass darkly," as well as in this life. I think it may be taken in both meanings. I speak of it only as I am accustomed to think upon it. Charity ! Love ! it is the test of Christian character. The highest attainments, the greatest sacrifices, the most extensive knowledge in holy things, and faith itself, are all imperfect and good for nothing without charity. These are "in part ;" they constitute but a part of the Christian, and an imperfect part—needed in only a part of his existence. Love comprehends the whole, takes all other graces with it as they are needed, and extends from this life through an eternal life. At what points shall we try ourselves upon charity, to see if we are truly in possession of it ? We are told in particulars what it will do, and what it will not do. Source of love ! communicate an influence from thyself, by which we shall be strengthened in our weakness, and enlightened in our darkness. "Charity suffereth long and is kind." If I cannot speak mildly to, and deal gently with my enemy, who again and again causes me to suffer in possessions, reputation and feelings, I must conclude that I have not charity. If I cannot with sweetness and tenderness bear with such as are dull of apprehension, or wayward in behavior after repeated explanation and counsel, I am lacking charity. "Charity envieth not." I am not uneasy, but rejoice when I see the advancement of a fellow creature in possessions, honors and comforts, whether he is my friend or enemy, and whether like prosperity attend myself or not, if I have charity. "Charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up." There is no disposition within me to speak of myself, unless called to do so for truth or propriety's sake ; for I have nothing to say of my own acquirements or performances ; and complimenting is painful to me, instead of elating me, if I have charity reigning within. "Doth not behave itself unseemly." Charity will not permit me to appear uncouthly or impolitely in any society, at home or abroad, among superiors or inferiors. "Seeketh not her own." Charity leads me to make my own possessions, reputation and comfort objects of pursuit, only as they come in connection with, and are consequent upon my seeking the greatest possible good of my fellow creatures. "Is not easily provoked." Contradic-

tions, neglects and insults produce no feelings of retaliation or resentment within my breast ; neither am I corroded or fretted by the little affairs in which my own wishes and calculations are not met, if my soul is possessed in love. "Thinketh no evil." I am afraid to judge of the motives of another, attributing evil to him, without the plainest evidence of an intention of evil ; and even then, I am deeply grieved if compelled to believe evil of him, if charity govern me. "Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." I have no heart to rejoice in my neighbor's ill success or downfall, though he make never so many efforts for my hurt ; and the doing right, and promotion of good, rejoice me at all times, and every where, if love is the one principle that inspires me. "Beareth all things." "Love covers a multitude of faults ;" it even holds the eye from seeing many of them, and those it does observe, it is ready to excuse and cover with some apology. I have no disposition to reveal the faults and shortcomings of others, but speak of their weakness and waywardness as I would be spoken of, if charity keep me ; for love will keep the tongue silent under the greatest suffering of wrong. "Believeth all things." The least evidence of good in my fellow creature is joyfully accepted, and in all things I am credulous to his advantage. "Hopeth all things." If filled with love, I am disposed to see every thing upon its bright side ; predicting good where it can possibly be expected, and never troubling myself or others with borrowed evils. This love dictates me to find some ground upon which to hope for good of him who exhibits none. In all things there are redeeming features to the eye of love. "Endureth all things." Love gives a power to endurance as lasting as life itself. It absorbs every repining feeling, so that while I am filled with this, there is nothing too hard for me to bear with fortitude and sweetness. In those reflections upon things "pure and lovely," I am strongly reminded that "*Think on these things*" is the command to

A STUDENT.

How happy is the true believer. The world may smile, or sneer, he heeds it not. His eye is fixed upon an endless glory ; he sees the King in his beauty, and the land which is very far off. By faith he brings its glories near. He already enjoys them by sweet anticipation, and can say, "The Lord is mine, and I am his." Is this our delightful experience ? If so, then death will be an everlasting gain : we shall hail its approach with gladness, and bless the hour which brings us into the presence of our God.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.

I at length will endeavor, by the grace of God assisting me, to comply with your request,—which was to write my Christian experience.

Although the Lord hath done great things for me, yet I feel myself very incompetent to write for the benefit of others. I was not favored, as many are, with religious parents to inculcate in my youthful mind the principles of our holy religion. But blessed be God, that “light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world,” shone with its radiating influence upon my dark and depraved heart, and led me, in the days of my youth, to seek after God. At the age of five years I was able to read in that Book of books, and the perusal of its sacred pages became my chief delight. I also delighted much in kneeling before the Lord, and repeating several forms of prayer, which a mother in Israel had taught me, and I verily believe that I often felt the approving smiles of God. When I was about ten years old, I forsook my forms, and began to pour out my wants to the Lord in my own simple language. On one of these occasions I was made very happy. An unearthly light sprung up in my soul, and I praised God aloud. I then resolved to forsake all the vanities of earth, and to consecrate myself wholly to the Lord. But I was ignorant of the devices of the enemy, and, being naturally diffident, I did not disclose the exercises of my mind to any individual. I therefore soon began to listen to the machinations of him who goeth about like a roaring lion; and alas for me! “My goodness soon became as the morning cloud and early dew.” I was sent from home to attend school, and, being introduced into a thoughtless crowd of young associates, my religious impressions, in a great degree, wore off. I began to conclude that I had been mistaken—that I was altogether too young to commence the Christian warfare. I therefore resolved to delay it until some further period. In this situation I remained about two years: my heart becoming more and more estranged from God. O how I grieved and resisted the Holy Spirit. How justly might he have given me up, and sealed me over to everlasting destruction. But, through boundless mercy in Jesus, he continued to strive with my rebellious heart. Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever. When I had just entered my thirteenth year, one of my young associates, who was a little older than myself, went to a Methodist meeting, and became powerfully

awakened. As soon as I found it out, I endeavored to persuade her to delay her espousals to God, telling her that I had always intended to embrace religion as soon as I was old enough. I urged upon her the awful consequences of making shipwreck of faith. I told her we were too young to embrace religion, for, in all probability, we should backslide, and then our last state would be worse than the first. But she told me, with streaming eyes, that she could not rest until she knew her sins were forgiven. She entreated me to go with her to the next meeting, (for I generally went to the Baptist Church with my parents,) which I did, and the Lord sent his word to my heart. I saw myself a great sinner—exposed to the wrath of God. After the congregation was dismissed, the class, and all those who were truly serious, were invited to tarry. I arose, went out of the door, but found that my dear M. tarried behind. I stood by the door until the preacher had spoken to all those who were sitting on the seat I had left. I then went in; but, to my great astonishment, he came immediately to me, and asked me if I loved the Lord. I was conscious that I was resisting the Holy Spirit, and therefore I did not love him. He urged upon me the fatal consequences of procrastination, and the necessity of remembering my Creator in the days of my youth. I went home with my heart burdened with sin, and immediately retired to ask the Lord to have mercy upon me; and for about two months I earnestly sought the Lord. In the mean time my dear M. and several others attended a camp-meeting, and found the pearl of great price. As soon as I heard of this, I immediately retired in great distress of mind, bordering almost on despair. My parents concluded that I was sick, for they knew not the distress of mind I was laboring under. Sometimes I concluded that I had so often resisted the Holy Spirit, that there was no mercy for me. I felt as though I could endure any thing rather than the burden of my sins. On the 1st of Aug., 1826, I retired into a wood, between a quarter and a half a mile from my father's house, resolving never to return until the Lord blest me with the pardon of my sins. I fell upon my face with a burden almost intolerable. But love had swifter wings than death, and mercy to my rescue flew. I scarcely had cast an imploring look, ere the Sun of Righteousness arose in my heart, and I was lost in wonder, love and praise. I felt an indubitable witness that my sins were all forgiven; and though seventeen years have since passed into eternity, I have never yet doubted the change that I then felt. Praise the Lord, O my soul. The next Sabbath I went to meeting, stayed in class, and told them what the Lord had done for my soul. This soon

reached my father's ears, and a flood of trials broke in upon me. My dear parent, who had always been very kind and indulgent, now upbraided me severely, telling me that the Methodists had frightened and made a fool of me, and that I was ruined for ever. I resolved, however, to embrace the first opportunity of casting my lot among this people. I told my mother my intention, but she said I had better not, for my father would not approve of it. But I was sensible that I ought to obey God rather than man. I therefore united with the class without his consent. My trials now increased daily; but, praise the Lord, they were all outward, for not a cloud did arise to darken my skies, or hide for a moment my Lord from my eyes. I continually sought help from above, and found the grace of God sufficient for me. My father now sought every means to induce me to withdraw from the class. He told me I must leave the Methodists, or leave his house for ever; and he would give me that night to consider upon it. This was a great trial. I sought direction from above, and the Lord nerved up my feeble mind with his precious promises. In the morning my father asked what I had concluded to do. I told him with streaming eyes, that I could not leave the church of God. He then bade me to leave his house for ever. I started; the Lord strengthening my heart by that precious promise, "When thy father and mother forsake thee, the Lord will take thee up." But when I had got through the gate into the road, he called me back. But a new trial awaited me. He then forbid my going to the house of God, and also my retiring to pray in secret. But in all this the Lord sustained me, and caused me to rejoice continually in the Rock of my salvation. Soon after this, another effort was made to try my faith. I was compelled to put on those ornaments which not only our discipline, but the spirit of God had taught me was wrong, and with these frivolous vanities, to go to the house of God. I wept all the way there, and through the exercises of the meeting; but the brethren encouraged me, and told me that they would not hurt me so long as it was not my desire to wear them. So I returned home with my spiritual strength renewed. But a greater trial awaited me. I was soon called to bid adieu to those servants of God who had been instrumental in bringing me to the knowledge of the truth, and that dear society by whose prayers and instructions I had been held up amidst all my trials, and to go into a strange land, with none to encourage me in the way to Zion. I now began to conclude that the enemy had prevailed against me; but here I proved that precious promise, "No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly." I soon heard that there was

Methodist preaching about two miles and a half from my father's house ; I went and found the people of God. I again united with them, and here my outward trials in a great measure abated. I soon began to see that the enemies of my heart, although vanquished, were not slain. I began to feel that it was not only my privilege, but my indispensable duty, to have the enemies of my Lord slain. I therefore besought the Lord to create in me a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within me. I felt it my duty to come out from the world more fully, and to walk in the highway of holiness. I enjoyed justifying grace ;—I knew that my actual sins were all forgiven, and that I was reconciled to God. But yet I often felt the rising of unholy passions, and these roots of bitterness caused me many a severe conflict. I verily believed that it was the will of God that I should be holy, and that there was efficacy in the blood of Jesus sufficient to cleanse me from all unrighteousness. I knew that none but the pure in heart could be permitted to see God, and my heart was contaminated with sin. I therefore resolved never to rest until the Lord removed this plague from my heart. I read all the works that I could obtain on this object, and earnestly besought the Lord to lead me into this narrow path.

Thus I passed four years, sometimes in the greatest struggle of soul, and spending whole nights in wrestling for this inestimable prize. I attended several camp meetings, with the expectation of receiving this blessing, but found it not. I sometimes could almost grasp it, but in a moment my faith would waver, and it seemed to be at a greater distance than ever. But Jan. 2, 1833, (memorable day to me,) while listening to a servant of God while he proclaimed the unsearchable riches of Christ, and his willingness to save his people from all sin and to save them now, I felt as though I could not live another day without having this work wrought in my heart. As there was considerable excitement in the place, he invited those who desired to flee the wrath to come and to secure the blessings of the gospel then, to come forward to a seat prepared for that purpose. Accordingly several came forward. Br. Y. called upon me to engage in prayer for these souls. I endeavored to pray for them, but could not pray for others while I felt such a struggle in my own soul. I arose, went to one corner of the school room, prostrated myself before the Lord, determined there to prove the virtue of Jesus' blood. I felt under no condemnation for any actual transgression ; I knew that I was freely justified ; but I felt such a sense of the purity of God, and the necessity of having his image stamped upon my soul as language cannot describe. I

wrestled and struggled for two hours, (as I was afterwards told,) almost insensible to any thing that was passing around me. It was a trying moment. I felt as though I was left alone to contend with all the powers of darkness. Many were the suggestions of the enemy, such as, If I succeeded in gaining the blessing, I should not dare to profess it; I should not retain it, &c. But I cried, Lord, give me the blessing now, and I leave the event with thee. This moment I claim the virtue of Jesus' blood. And that moment I was emptied of all; and sin, inbred sin, no longer hindered close communion with my heavenly Father. It was peace unutterable.

"A sacred awe that dare not move,
In all the silent heaven of love."

I soon found that in order to retain this blessing, I must declare what the Lord had done for me. This was a great cross. I knew it would expose me to the scrutiny of the world, and the censure of those who did not fully understand this doctrine. But bless the Lord, it was like fire shut up in my bones. Ere I was aware, I told my classmates what the Lord had done for me, and I soon found that declaring what the Lord had wrought, strengthened and confirmed my own faith. I now walked in the unclouded light of God's countenance. I felt that "in him I lived, and moved, and had my being." I dared not live but a moment at a time, and that moment by faith in the Son of God. In this frame of mind I lived three years; but there being but very little said on this subject at that time, the enemy took the advantage of my soul. He pointed me to many of my brethren whom I considered far better than myself, and they made not this profession to the world. (But bless the Lord, some of them have since.) I began to listen to his machinations, and as soon began to hold the blessing with a trembling hand; I began to fear that I had taken a wrong course by openly declaring what the Lord had done for me. I therefore concluded to say no more about it in public, but to keep it concealed in my own breast. I was not tempted to think that I had never received this blessing, for here I could have answered all the powers of darkness. But I soon found the fatal consequences of reasoning with the enemy of my soul, and not obeying the order of God, who hath told us, "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." I thus continued to reason with the adversary, until my soul was in an awful dilemma. Here I would say to all, O beware of casting away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward, for lan-

guage fails to describe the bitterness of soul that is felt by one who hath fallen from this heaven of life. For some time I dared not ask God to restore the witness, for I knew that he would not kindle this light in the soul to be concealed, and I dared not covenant with God to be his faithful witness; I felt it was worse than death my God to love, and not my God alone. While in this situation, I attended a camp-meeting, where many were groaning to be delivered from inbred sin. It was faithfully declared from the stand not only to be our privilege, but our indispensable duty. A venerable father in the gospel arose and said that he had once enjoyed this blessing, but had lost the evidence; and he invited all those who were in his situation, together with those who were earnestly seeking for full redemption, to meet him before the stand, and unitedly to ask God to effect this great work in their hearts. I again cast myself as a helpless sinner at Jesus' feet, pleading the virtue of that blood that had been once applied to my heart. That scripture was powerfully impressed upon my mind, "All things are possible to him that believeth." I cried, Lord, I will, I do believe. I immediately felt a calm in my soul. For about twenty-four hours I had been in the greatest struggle of soul that I ever experienced in all my life. It was not immediately accompanied with the witness that the work was effected, but venturing upon that promise, "Whatsoever things ye shall ask in faith, believing, it shall be granted." I arose, but scarcely had got upon my feet when my soul was so filled that my body was not able to sustain it. I fell prostrate to the earth, lost in wonder, love and praise. I felt the indubitable seal, the signature of divine love. I felt that I was every whit made whole, and I could have declared to assembled worlds the efficacy of Jesus' blood to save from all sin. But the fear of professing more than I manifested by my life hath often since caused me to hold this blessing with a trembling hand. But blessed be God, the past year I have been enabled to walk more fully by faith in the Son of God. I feel that he hath settled and fixed my wavering soul, with all his weight of love, and the language of my heart is,

"Fixed on this ground will I remain,
Though my heart fail and flesh decay;
This anchor shall my soul sustain,
When earth's foundations melt away.
Mercy's full power I then shall prove,
Loved with an everlasting love."

A WITNESS FOR JESUS.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

HOPE.

There are many kinds and degrees of hope. No one can possess a hope without a reason or foundation. The young hope for pleasure in amusements, because others have given assurances that there was pleasure in them, and because there are so many pursuing the same course to attain it. The lover of riches hopes to be rich, because there are so many who have actually obtained them, and because there are so many opportunities to obtain them. The awakened and penitent sinner hopes for God's favor, because God has promised favor to the penitent and humble. The pardoned sinner is said to hope in the mercy of God, because his hope of heaven and everlasting bliss is obtained through that mercy, exhibited in Jesus Christ.

There is a vast difference between the hope of a mere pardoned sinner, and that of a sanctified Christian, in the strength and influence of it.

1. The mere pardoned sinner, or converted man, associates always in his hope the fact of his conversion; whereas the sanctified believer always has his *present experience* associated with the glorious opening prospect of eternal life with God in heaven.

2. There is also a difference in the strength of the hope they enjoy. The justified sinner has a sure hope, that God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven him all his iniquities, because his experience agrees with it, and he hopes for eternal life through a continuation of that mercy; yet he often entertains doubts whether he ever received pardon, or shall ever inherit eternal life. We often hear Christians speak of a weak, trembling hope, yet they value it, weak as it is, above all things else, and would not give it up for a universe of worlds. I think, when I hear such expressions from sound Christians, that their hope is not weak, but strong and priceless; yet there are those whose hope of heaven is weak; and indeed all who live beneath their privilege in gospel attainments, have comparatively a weak hope, and often such expressions as the following, from sanctified saints, seem presumptuous, and too full of confidence. "I am *wholly* the Lord's, and *I feel that I am saved from all my sin.*" "I feel nothing in my heart contrary to God's will." "I as firmly believe that I shall get to heaven and dwell there for ever, as that I now live and breathe, and have a being," &c. Yet this is a certainty realized in the soul by many; and they are as conscious that God dwells in them agreeable to St. John, as they once were of

pardon ; and it is just as consistent with the Bible, especially the gospel, to say I am filled with love to God — I am saved from all sin — my heart is sanctified to God — I am dead to the world and alive to God, &c., as for us to say — I feel the mercy of God through Jesus Christ, in the forgiveness of all my transgressions, &c. The hope of the mature Christian is often full ; — O glorious hope, of everlasting life.

The hope of such an one is wisely compared to a mighty anchor, immovable in good anchorage ground. It is cast within the veil — it does not need that continual watching, as though it were smaller and consequently not so strong. When our faith is in proportion to our hope, we can rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, in the midst of the severest storms of earth and conflicts with hell. Such a hope is always *lively*, and like a thousand anchors, strong and abiding through rain and sunshine, cold and heat, adversity and prosperity. There is no trembling in the soul, while reflecting upon eternity, judgment and death. It dwells in God, and *hath* eternal life abiding in it.

3. The contrast is quite as great in the *influence* of hope as in its *nature*. The one is like a man feeling his way in a dark though accustomed room or passage ; he feels a certainty mingled with an uncertainty ; while the sanctified walk in the light of God's countenance, in such a sense as that, they feel no uncertainty as to the termination of their journey. They fear nothing from earth or hell. "The Lord is round about them, even as the mountains are round about Jerusalem." Possessing such a hope, there is life in all their devotions, and delight in all their duties. In fact there is no death or darkness in them — Christ *lives* in them. Their perfect hope draws them onward, and directs their thoughts and affections to things divine. How changed the state of such an one, from that of a guilty, depraved, despairing sinner. The one often finds the pains of hell getting hold upon him, and black clouds of despair settling around him ; the other has Christ living within — the hope of glory and heaven immediately before him, and he just ready to enter and take possession of the purchased inheritance.

Such a hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto us. It makes its possessor bold in the time of conflict and trial, and gives unspeakable joy and triumph at the approach of death and eternity. O may every one who reads these lines, seek and possess such a hope.

N. RICE.

Natick, Feb. 5, 1844.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

NOTES BY THE WAY.

Nov. 11th.—I have of late enjoyed a sweet sense of dwelling in God. The blessedness of my present inheritance in Christ is unutterable.

For words are weak, I feel them weak,
When the overpowering weight of bliss
Rests on the heart; O who could speak
Of rapture so sublime as this.

'Tis enough — the triune God has made my heart his abiding residence, and where he dwells, the life of heaven is already begun. Yesterday I heard the funeral discourse of the late Mrs. A. M. L., by Dr. B. While the first hymn was being sung, I had such a view of the glory upon which our departed sister had entered, that my emotions overcame me, and I was constrained to sit down and weep. And it is thus that my joyous, grateful feelings oftener find vent than otherwise.

I was familiarly acquainted with her previous to her departure for the Oregon mission. About two and a half years since she left the endearments of her native country, was afterward united in marriage to the superintendent of the mission, and was permitted to embrace an infant three days previous to her death. The infant preceded her to the heavenly country a few hours. When she heard of its death, she swooned, and hastened to follow it to its native home. Dear Anna Maria, thy robes were washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, and thou art now with that company which no man can number. Thy free spirit has doubtless ere this visited the scene of thy former friendships.

Last week I was encouraged in my endeavors to be "instant in season and out of season," by the experience of a brother W., a member of my husband's class. For some weeks past he has been earnestly pressing after holiness. On Thursday evening before last, he was telling the manner in which a penitent with whom he was conversing, was enabled to believe and receive the blessing of pardon. He made the way of faith so clear, that at the close of the class I desired to know why he did not take the advice he gave, and assured him that it was the same faith that he required of the penitent, that God *now* required he should exercise.

I directed him to promises as surely suited to his case as a seeker of holiness, as those to which he had directed the penitent as suited to his. I continued to urge that the Lord only required that he should set himself apart wholly to his service, lay all upon the altar, and then believe that he *receives*, not that he will receive, but that he *does* receive just *now*, because he hath said, "Now is the accepted time."

I urged him to bring the matter to the point, and begin at once to make the sacrifice and *believe* God. One remark was specially blest: "Perhaps you already feel that you present all as far as you know, but the enemy may suggest that there may be something that you do not know of; foil the tempter by presenting to God *all, whether known or unknown*; make no provision for future emergencies, but say hereafter, as thou shalt reveal thy will, behold thy willing servant." Here had been the difficulty, and here he gained the victory. Last class night he came rejoicing in the perfect love of God—a joyful witness that the blood of Jesus cleanseth. He received the blessing on the preceding class evening, by saying, I present all, whether known or unknown, and during the intervening week, had gloriously proved the power of saving grace. And now he bids fair to be one that shall chase a thousand.

"Faith has for its foundation broad,
A stable rock on which I stand,
The truth and faithfulness of God —
All other grounds are sinking sand.

My frames and feelings ebb and flow,
And when my faith suspends on them,
It fleets and staggers to and fro,
And dies amid the dying flame.

Could I believe what God has spoke,
Rely on his unchanging love,
And cease to grasp at fleeting smoke,
No changes would my mountain move.

The frame of nature shall decay,
Time's changes break her rusty chain,
Yea, heaven and earth shall pass away,
But faith's foundation firm remains."

Nov. 14th.—Yesterday temptations ran high, but through the blood of the Lamb I was more than conqueror. I felt no condemnation, yet the suggestion was continually urged that I had offended, and thereby prevented those lively emotions with which

I have of late been favored. The promise is, that if in any thing I be otherwise minded, God will reveal even this unto me. My love and confidence in my Heavenly Father was unabated, and I earnestly besought Him to reveal the cause, if, in any way, I had grieved his Spirit. Blessed be his name, I was enabled to hold fast my integrity, and say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him; I will maintain my ways before him: he also shall be my salvation." Even before the trial passed over, I rejoiced in hope, assured that the trial of my faith was precious, believing fully that it would be to my furtherance in the heavenly way. O what searching of heart! What carefulness before God! what earnestness in supplication was wrought as the result of this trial! One very singular temptation has been urged, viz., that in my earnest desire to be useful, I had stretched myself beyond my measure. Satan presented scriptural argument, as is not unusual with him. But he gave, as ever, a one sided view of the subject. I felt to say, "Lord, if in the ardor of my zeal for the extension of thy kingdom I have been too active in the performance of outward duties, I am willing and desirous to desist. If, by bearing testimony for thee in the great congregation, I have overstepped the bounds of scriptural propriety, only assure me of it in such a manner that my spirit may be full instructed, and set at rest in this matter. Light reflecting perfect clearness beamed upon my mind, from the application of Gal. iii. 27, 28. I here saw, that as many as had been baptized into Christ are *one* Spirit. There is neither Jew nor Greek — bond nor free — *male* nor *female*. The tempter suggested, that the oft presented petition to be eminently useful, and the way in which I had been led to be useful, was stretching beyond the measure allotted to females. I now saw that Satan had been quoting scripture, and taking a great deal of pains, by many a plausible pretext, to keep me from giving in a public testimony for God. I now feel very sure that it will not be asked in the day of reckoning, whether the good done on this and the other occasion was accomplished by a male or female. This was in the afternoon, during our sweet Tuesday meeting.

In the evening we had a love feast at our church. How gladly my ever watchful foe would have managed the matter so as to have prevented my testimony while there. Previous to going I was signally blest. The powerful temptations under which I had been laboring had driven me frequently and importunately to the throne of grace.

Though light had beamed upon my mind on the subject just mentioned, yet the enemy still tried to make me believe that

God had a controversy in some way or other, as a reason why I did not receive a speedy answer, and enjoy rapturous manifestations of love uninterruptedly. Before stepping out of the door, I asked my Heavenly Father to direct to a word in season, and opened on these words, "At the beginning of thy supplication the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee, for thou art greatly beloved, therefore understand the matter." A voice from the upper world could scarcely have been recognized with greater power. I *felt* that it was the voice of God, and glory unutterable filled my soul. The Lord was eminently present with me while giving in my testimony at the love feast, and throughout the exercises all was heaven and love. After my return, my soul was so wrapped in visions of blessedness, that I felt but little disposed to sleep; and when I slept my spirit seemed wakefully communing with God.

Much of my time has of late been spent in preparing for Sabbath School celebrations. I believe it is a work to which duty calls, and I feel that my happiness consists in being in the will of God. If the attainment of rapturous emotion were my sole aim, I should perhaps decline entering into such engagements. But the attainment of this, I am sure should not be the absorbing aim with the follower of Christ. Christ went about doing all manner of good, and the more we have of his spirit, the greater will be our endeavors to be like him. The spirit of holiness is the spirit of sacrifice. Christ came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him. And often the disciple may be as his Master. The multitude may press upon him when he would fain be alone communing with his God. How often have I found it thus. The season of retirement has been broken in upon, and from morn till eve has another and yet another presented, where it would seem as if the Savior gave into the hand of his disciple such food as tended to refresh the spirit of those that came. Blessed be God that I have ever proved under such circumstances that I have suffered no lack.

It is the wisdom and duty of every one of us solemnly to commit our spirits into the hand of God, to be sanctified by his grace, devoted to his honor, employed in his service, and fitted for his kingdom.

They that pray in faith may rejoice in hope.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

ON CONTINUAL PRAYER.

[An extract from the writings, now very seldom met with, of Antonia Bourignon, a very pious woman, and a decided advocate of the doctrine of Christian perfection, who lived about two hundred years ago.]

The children of God, and those who tend to Christian perfection, ought *to pray continually*, and *never to cease*, because the Devil never ceases to tempt them; and the more they desire perfection, the more are they assaulted with temptations; and the more occasion they have for continual prayer; sometimes to beg assistance from heaven—sometimes to thank God for his graces—sometimes to bless and honor him. So that there never passes one moment of the day, wherein he who observes narrowly the dispositions of his soul, has not some occasion to pray unto God. He will find it *always necessary to pray continually*, because he has continually matter for it, by the occasions which befall us, both inwardly and outwardly.

For if we converse with men, they sometimes will praise us, so as to give us occasion of vain glory; at other times they will despise us, so as to make us angry, or sullen, or to despise or hate them; and when we have any business with them, avarice slips in, or we seek ourselves. A prosperous event will make us rejoice, or will puff us up; an adversary will make us sad and melancholy; and thus a thousand other accidents, which do daily befall us outwardly, do continually afford occasion to have recourse unto God by prayer, to beg of him his grace, and strength to uphold us, that we fall not into sin amidst so many diverse encounters, which do outwardly befall us, and much more inwardly. For if we did consider well the diverse agitations and motions of the passions of our souls, we would there find infinite evils which we must resist. This business of bridling our vicious inclinations, is a continual employment for him who applies to the perfection of the soul; and he will find always matter for PRAYER TO GOD, and for begging his help and assistance, without which we cannot fight against so many visible and invisible enemies. He must give himself up to *continual prayer*, or else live and die their slave, and be always miserable.

I do not desire that you should have your spirit continually bent unto prayer after your ordinary way; for this would wrong your head, and would forge a thousand imaginations which would neither be necessary nor useful. But I would have you always to

call upon God when you have need, and to bless him as often as you receive from him any grace and assistance, seeing it is an ingratitude not to thank him for every particular gift that he bestows upon us ; since gratefulness for a benefit obtains always new favors from God, and he desires that we should call upon him in our needs, promising to succor and help us. If God desires that we pray unto him, why should we desire not to do it? He says, "seek and ye shall find," &c.

How comes it, then, that you cannot overcome your enemies, since God on his part has given you so many promises, which, on his side, will always be infallible? It must needs be said, that the failing is on your side ; and I cannot see what it can be, but that of *continual prayer*, which you do not sufficiently understand ; and you think to overcome your enemies with your own strength, which you will never do.

You have indeed given them power to hurt you by your own will ; but it is not strong enough to chase out your enemies. There is needful, now, an altogether particular grace of God, which will not be given you *but by prayer, and that continual*.

I will tell you what prayer is, that you may understand it, fearing, lest it seem to you too hard to be embraced, though there is nothing more sweet and agreeable ; but men's imaginations make it appear difficult, yea impossible to some, because they have never discovered what prayer is. Some attribute it to many *vocal words* ; others to speculations or meditations of the spirit, which they call *mental prayers*. But believe me, it is neither words nor meditations that makes prayer. But true prayer consists *in the conversation of spirit that man has with his God*, when his heart speaks to him, and asks the things he has need of ; or blesses him and thanks him for his favors, or praises his greatness, goodness, love and other qualities, which man observes in his God. This *elevation of spirit* or *conversation* that he has with God makes up true prayer, without which there can be no true prayer, though they call by this name many diverse things, which it were impossible that man could do continually ; as Jesus Christ has said, *that he must always pray, and never faint*.

He could not have appointed man to do impossible things, as continual prayer would be, after the manner that they would understand it. For if to pray, it behoved a man to be always in churches, all the other things necessary for the support of life would perish, and man would die for the want of them. And if to pray, he must be always on his knees, the body could not suffer this continual fatigue. And if it behoved him always to

meditate fine speculations in his spirit, he would break his head; or if he must speak prayers continually, he could neither eat, sleep, nor drink. So that it is not to be believed that God demands of man any other *continual prayer* but that of the *conversation of his spirit with God*, which may be done continually, while waking, drinking, eating, yea, even while sleeping; seeing he who has entertained his spirit with God all the day long, does certainly rest with him while sleeping, because the spirit, having walked with its God while awake, it reposes itself likewise with him when sleeping. And usually the vital spirits are full of what they love; and what has been seen and heard in the day time, is represented unto the spirit in sleep. So that he *who converses with his spirit elevated unto God by day*, loses very little of the same conversation during the night; and even sometimes God communicates himself unto him by dreams.

By which it appears, that it is very possible to pray continually, as Jesus Christ has taught us, yea, there is nothing more easy and agreeable. For my part, I could not live without this continual prayer, and death would be more sweet to me than to be one hour out of it, because all sorts of pleasures, without this conversation, are to me vexations and mortal afflictions. For this cause I abide always in it; and I do not think that you have seen me go out of this conversation to delight in other things. By which you may see that it is very possible to pray always and never to cease; and that it is even good and pleasant, seeing he who is in this continual prayer is never melancholy; which you may also have observed in me, amidst so many different events and occasions of grief. Give yourself therefore to this continual prayer, and by it you shall overcome both your inward and outward enemies. You shall have joy and peace in yourself, and you shall learn all that you have need to do and avoid. Do not apply yourself to contemplate the great wonders of God, or his conduct towards men, nor the other mysteries of God or of religion; but practise this continual prayer according to your need, speaking to God continually. If you are in temptations, beg his assistance; if you are in ignorance, beg wisdom from him to fulfill his will; if you are weak, strength; and if you receive his graces, bless him, and thank him for this favor done to you, a sinner. And thus you shall have continual matter of having *your spirit filled up to God*, in which true prayer consists.

For the Guide to Christian Perfection.

BE HOLY TO BE USEFUL.

That holiness is the great qualification for usefulness, is felt by every thoughtful Christian. That usefulness for God's glory is the principal object of our life, is not doubted. Does the follower of him who gave his life to do others good, ask how he may be useful? He may be told, "*Be holy, and you will be useful.*"

There is one point of this important subject on which I would offer a few hints. It is *that the sphere of our usefulness will be enlarged in proportion as we are holy.*

We see this done by education. Two brothers are brought up together, and in the first part of their lives enjoy the same advantages for gaining knowledge. One becomes a mechanic, and the other obtains a liberal education. The sphere of usefulness of the latter is enlarged far beyond that of his brother; and yet the mechanic may have better natural talents than his brother. Education gives him a great advantage.

So in holiness. Other things being equal, the man who is enjoying the most of the spirit of Jesus Christ in his heart, is the best prepared for an extensive field of usefulness. There are many members in the church of Christ, who do but very little for their Master's cause. It is not because they have not talents, but because the heart is wrong. They lack the motive which made Paul the useful man he was — the love of Christ *constraining* or compelling them to labor. The machinery runs feebly, because the motive power is weak. Let them be but entirely sanctified to God, and their sphere of usefulness would be vastly enlarged. Some of those who now are at ease in Zion, or worldly — doing nothing, but hindering the cause, proving curses to the church, would become active, official members of the church, class leaders, Sabbath School teachers, and other important officers in the household of faith. Some of those who are now class leaders, would be made useful exhorters and local preachers. Many of our brethren who are now in the located ministry, immersed in cares and that worldliness which destroys their usefulness, would devote themselves wholly to preaching Jesus, and would be among the most useful ministers in the church. Some of the best talent for preaching that there is, is so buried up in the rubbish of worldly business, in the local ministry, that it is almost useless. How can a man preach as he ought and might,

who six-sevenths of the time has his mind upon worldly things, and who has little leisure for reading, not to mention the lack of time for sufficient private meditation and devotion! Give that man this blessing, and he would lay aside every weight, and run like a strong man, as he is, this race.

So, my brethren, it is in the itinerant ministry. Our superintendents know men, in every part of the work, who have natural talent and acquirements enough to render them successful in any appointments in our most difficult places, if they had but a heart wholly devoted to their work—"a single eye;" but these same men are now in the third or fourth rank of preachers. They can be useful but in a very narrow sphere.

What was it made Bramwell what he was? Not his talents, but his holiness. This was the secret of the success of Whitefield, of Summerfield, and many others. Their hearts were on fire with perfect love! Let us all—Christians in every sphere in life—*be holy, and then it will be impossible but that we shall be useful.*

JAMES MUDGE.

West Springfield.

EXTRACT

OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. WESLEY, BEFORE THE GREAT ASSIZE.

SUFFER me to add a few words to all of you who are at this day present before the Lord. Should not you bear it in your minds all the day long, that a more awful day is coming? A large assembly this! But what is it to that which every eye will then behold—the general assembly of all the children of men that ever lived on the face of the whole earth! A few will stand at the judgment seat this day, to be judged, touching what shall be laid to their charge. And they are now reserved in prison, perhaps in chains, till they are brought forth to be tried and sentenced. But we shall all, I that speak, and you that hear, stand at the judgment seat of Christ. And we are now reserved on this earth, which is not our home—in this prison of flesh and blood, perhaps many of us in chains of darkness too, till we are ordered to be brought forth. Here a man is questioned concerning one or two facts, which he is supposed to have committed. There we are to give an account of all our works, from the cradle to the grave: of all our words, of all our desires and tempers,

all the thoughts and intents of our hearts: of all the use we have made of our various talents, whether of mind, body or fortune, till God said: Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward. In this court it is possible those who are guilty may escape for want of evidence. But there is no want of evidence in that court. All men with whom you had the most secret intercourse, who were privy to all your designs and actions are ready before your face. So are all the spirits of darkness, who inspired evil designs, and assisted in the execution of them. So are all the angels of God, those eyes of the Lord that run to and fro over all the earth, who watched over your soul, and labored for your good, so far as you would permit. So is your own conscience, a thousand witnesses in one, now no more capable of being blinded or silenced, but constrained to know and speak the naked truth, touching all your thoughts, and words and actions. And is conscience as a thousand witnesses? Yea, but God is as a thousand consciences! O who can stand before the face of the great God, even our Savior, Jesus Christ.

See, see! He cometh! He maketh the clouds his chariots! He rideth upon the wings of the wind! A devouring fire goeth before him, and after him a flame burneth! See, he sitteth upon his throne, clothed with light as with a garment, arrayed with majesty and honor! Behold his eyes are as a flame of fire, his voice as the sound of many waters!

How will ye escape? Will you call to the mountains to fall on you—the rocks to cover you! Alas, the mountains themselves, the rocks, the earth, the heavens, are just ready to flee away! Can ye prevent the sentence? Wherewith? With all the substance of thy house, with thousands of gold and silver? Blind wretch! Thou comest naked from thy mother's womb, and more naked into eternity. Hear the Lord, the Judge! "Come, ye blessed of my Father! inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Joyful sound! How widely different from that voice, echoes through the expanse of heaven, "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!" And who is he, that can prevent or retard the full execution of either sentence? Vain hope! Lo, hell is moved from beneath, to receive those who are ripe for destruction! And the everlasting doors lift up their heads, that the heirs of glory may come in!

REV. C. P. BRAGDON, of the Maine Conference, is now in the West, for the benefit of his health. He is very useful as an agent of the Guide.